

Deaf Culture Question of the Week – Feb. 13 - 17, 2012
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Being sick in real life can take many different forms. The same is true in ASL. You can simply “be sick at a particular point in time” and expect to recover. You can have some kind of “recurring illness” that strikes you repeatedly but not constantly and you can be “chronically ill” for an extended period of time.

In ASL these states of illness are expressed how?

- a) ASL has separate verb signs that mean “be sick at a particular point in time,” “to have a recurring illness,” and “to be sick over an extended period of time”
- b) There isn’t really a good way of making these distinctions in ASL
- c) The movement of the verb sign “*sick*” is modified to express these meanings
- d) ASL uses separate adverb signs that mean “to be sick at one time,” “to be frequently sick,” and “being sick over a long period of time.”

Answer “c” – ASL can inflect some verbs for temporal aspect; that is, to show frequency or duration of an action. Performing the sign *sick* in its uninflected form with a single movement back towards the signer’s forehead and chest area means the person is “sick at a particular point in time.” It simply expresses the state of being sick with no other information. Executing the sign *sick* with repeated movement means you are “sick repeatedly” (recurring inflection). And, executing the sign *sick* with continuous, circular movement indicates that you are “sick over an extended period of time” (inflection for duration).

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